

Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

November 2012

**NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLANNING**



OOO OPEN
for Business

LOCALISM

**QUALITY
ORGANISATION**

STREETS ahead

Cabinet Members


	Councillor Alan Melton
Leader of the Council	

	Councillor Christopher Seaton
Deputy Leader of the Council	

	Councillor Ralph Butcher
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor John Clark
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Steve Garratt
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Pop Jolley
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Peter Murphy
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor David Oliver
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Kit Owen
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Mac Cotterell MBE
Cabinet Advisor	

Neighbourhood Planning

NP1 Growth and future shape of Fenland

Fenland Communities Development Plan - Core Strategy

The consultation responses from the Core Strategy, Further Consultation Draft, carried out between July and September have now been collated and set out in a Key Issues and Responses Report. This was agreed by the Communities Development Plan Review Team on 8 November and is now available for viewing on the website.

Key issues raised include the need for further consideration of the affordable housing policy, re-consideration of the North East March strategic allocation, and the need for highway issues in Wisbech to be resolved. New policies will also be required to address concerns raised by statutory consultees relating to the historic environment, biodiversity, and health and well being issues.

Preparation of the final draft of the Core Strategy - known as the Proposed Submission version - is now underway and is to be considered by Cabinet and Council on 24 January 2013. If agreed, the document will be consulted on for 6 weeks in early 2013. The Council will not make any further changes and any responses received as a result of the consultation will be forwarded to the Government for consideration by an Independent Inspector at next summer's scheduled public examination.

Local Market Town Transport Strategies (MTTS)

The Whittlesey Market Town Transport Strategy was adopted by the Area Joint Committee in October 2012. This strategy is a programme of walking, cycling and public transport measures that are required for the town. The strategy will be used to support applications and proposals for funding to implement transport schemes for the benefit of the Whittlesey community.

A March MTTs Member Steering Group meeting was held during October 2012. Councillors discussed and gave views on possible projects that could form a draft strategy, specifically regarding walking, cycling and public rights of way. There was a focus for this meeting on public and community transport and roads. CCC Officers will now develop a draft strategy for December 2012, including the projects members discussed, followed by a public consultation. The results will inform improvements to March transport routes.

Fenland Rail Development Strategy

Councillors at March Town Council and Whittlesey Town Council discussed and agreed to support the Fenland Rail Development Strategy and the Community

Rail Partnership at their October 2012 meetings. This followed a presentation by Cllr Kit Owen as Portfolio Holder for Strategic Transport. Such community support will demonstrate to the rail industry a local commitment which will in turn promote service/facility improvements.

The Hereward Community Rail Partnership was launched on March Station on Friday 12 October 2012. Many key stakeholders attended the event highlighting the strong local support for our rail proposals. This project shows real community commitment and ownership of local rail improvements.

NP2 The built environment

Whittlesey Barrier Bank

The Environment Agency (EA) are currently completing urgent repairs to the Whittlesey barrier bank to address areas of damage caused by burrowing animals and grazing livestock which had been identified as adversely affecting the bank.

A public drop in session was held this month in Whittlesey to explain proposals for more extensive bank strengthening works which are to be undertaken over the next two or three summers. There are significant volumes of material to be imported to undertake these works with associate lorry movements, but this work is essential to the future integrity of the bank and represents the preferred solution of local stakeholders.

The EA have undertaken to maintain communication with affected residents, especially those living on the identified access routes. FDC officers will also continue to liaise with the EA throughout the preparation and delivery of the project in order to maintain proper flood prevention for the Whittlesey community.

Horsefair Bus Station Safety Improvements

The Safety Improvement works within the Horsefair Bus Station are progressing well and are scheduled to be complete for the end of November, following which taxis will be able to utilise the new rank adjacent to the Bus Station entrance. A new Code of Conduct will also be introduced for all users of the bus station.

The new facility for taxi ranking which is under construction will include new street lighting, improved pedestrian crossing facilities and a shopping trolley bay as well as a taxi drop off point in addition to the rank itself. In all the new rank will provide better facilities for taxi users and with the new management arrangements will result in a safer environment and an improved integration of

public transport providers within the bus station as a whole. The benefits will be accessible to users in time for the Christmas shopping period.

Old River Nene Pump Out Sanitation Point, March

The Sanitation Point Pump Out Facility on the Old River Nene in March is now fully operational, as of 29 October 2012, following its £25k refurbishment. The facility was refurbished after recent mechanical problems to encourage users of the Middle Level Waterways to dispose of their foul waste in an appropriate manner, thus helping maintain clean waterways and protect the local environment in Fenland. The facility will also hopefully encourage passing boating traffic into the town and contribute to the local economy.



The facility offers boaters free chemical toilet disposal, boat tank flush, drinking water and boat hold refuse collection in addition to a new boat pump-out facility. The boat pump-out is now token-operated. A single token costs £12.50 which can be bought from the 'Fenland @ your service' shop in Broad Street or from the George Campbell Leisure Centre. The same Middle Level Commissioners key as before has been utilised to ensure a smooth introduction for our existing customers.

Fenland Renaissance

Progress continues to be made in working with property owners across Fenland to enhance the structural integrity and appearance of their properties via the project grants and Streetpride involvement. The project team continue to liaise with owners and monitor sites & properties on the Renaissance property 'hot list'. Properties on the 'hot list' include: land at Orange Grove, Wisbech & the Old School, Tydd St Giles.

Wisbech Dilapidated Buildings

The Council continues to pursue action to help bring forward improvements to these long term dilapidated buildings in order to improve the visual amenity and bring the building back into positive use.

- **24 High Street**

Expert input on options available has just been received regarding this building. Officers will prepare an options appraisal in light of this advice and other relevant material factors for member consideration.

- **11/12 High Street and the Phoenix**

A detailed valuation/development brief is being prepared by external consultants and the Council has been asked to provide design/build expertise in relation to these properties to inform the options being considered. The provision of this information will enable the consultants to deliver a comprehensive suite of options with a view to bringing these properties back into use.

- **1 Nene Quay**

Positive liaison with the owner continues and at a recent meeting with FDC officers, it was confirmed that the owner is looking to submit a planning application necessary for remedial works. Regular liaison with the owner will continue and all possible officer assistance is being provided to enable this prominent property to be restored and brought back into use as speedily as possible.

Nene Waterfront Project

The leaders of both FDC and CCC pledged, as part of the Wisbech 2020 Vision project, to improve the local environment around the proposed developments sites associated with the Nene Waterfront development. It is hoped that, as well as improving the general appearance of the area, it will make the area more appealing to potential developers.

All scheduled site improvements to the proposed residential sites around the Boathouse have now been completed. Works included the reduction in height of the hoardings, the creation of bunding to the site boundaries, highway resurfacing and the importation and levelling of topsoil. The final aspect of the works to be completed is the resurfacing of the footways, which is currently being undertaken by CCC's highway contractors.

As a result of the works, there has been a significant visual improvement to the sites and surrounding areas which will drastically improve the perception of visitors to The Boathouse and surrounding Nene Waterfront Regeneration area.

Localism

L1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

Benefits

We are continuing to deliver significant improvements in performance as we continue with the Benefits Recovery Plan. At the end of October, we were able to start actioning new claims and changes that were just a week old, the best position for us since 2009. Work is also being processed much quicker; the average for October alone was 22 days for new claims and 6 days for changes. However, allowing time for customers to supply information we need to update their claims (such as proof of earnings, savings and identity) means that the overall year-to-date performance is improving at a slower rate. Overall, for the year we are now achieving 33 days for new claims and 12 days for changes. These improvements help to speed up the process of claiming benefit payments, enabling residents quicker access to the benefits they are entitled to.

Benefit Fraud

At the same time as helping the most vulnerable in our community by paying them the benefits they are entitled to, we continue to take robust action against those who deliberately defraud the public purse. A Wisbech woman was sentenced to 200 hours unpaid community work for falsely claiming £19,000 in benefits (Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and Income Support). She will also have to repay this. She deliberately withheld advising us that she was living with her partner and claiming money that she was not entitled to.

Homeless Reconnections

The Council has worked closely with the Ferry Project to reconnect a homeless client who had been staying at the night shelter. The gentleman had been in Wisbech for a few months following a promise of work which didn't exist.

A process of delegation has been agreed between partner agencies, including the Council, the Ferry Project, the Police and the UK Border Agency to ensure that the reconnection process is efficient and streamlined. This helps to tackle rough sleeping in the Fenland area and the related pressures on other services.

The Council facilitated this gentleman's return home to Poland via Government Grant. There have been a total of 12 reconnections since April 2012 as part of the Council's homeless prevention work.

Healthy Homes update

A total of 203 healthy homes/handyman type jobs have been undertaken for the benefit of Fenland residents since April 2012. These small scale works help to

reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls for local residents, and in turn reduces pressures on expensive health related services. The works also improve the health and wellbeing of the elderly and vulnerable residents effected.

L2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland

Fenland Diverse Community Forum

The Council facilitated Diverse Community Forum have been successful with a funding application to the Learning Skills Partnership to enable the Ferry Project to expand current ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) courses, currently being delivered in Wisbech, to cover both March and Chatteris. We are in discussion with businesses in both towns regarding delivering ESOL classes to their staff in the New Year.

This ESOL training will help enhance community cohesion and integration. Although ESOL is not necessarily a solution to cohesion issues on its own, increased language skills imply that people can play a fuller part in society, ensure better take up of health services and reduce funds spent on translation.

As one of the twelve key themes of the Fenland Diverse Community Forum, this project links to the other themed areas of the plan and starts proactive ESOL training in these towns.

Community House Half Term Activity

During the half term holiday, the Council were involved in three key activities, linked to Community House. The Jammin' Music Project event attracted around 40 people and provided an opportunity for the Council to publicise the work of the Community House and conduct consultation for the REACH Community Learning Project. The main purpose of the event was to celebrate the efforts of the young people who had been taking part in the project over the past year.

A Halloween family fun day was also organised by the Council and attracted around 160 people. The Halloween / Guy Fawkes evening event at the Spinney allowed the Council to engage with around 150 people to encourage families in to training work and signposting to support services.

As well as providing opportunities for the Council and partners to promote assistance and learning opportunities, the events also helped to provide diversionary activities for many children and young adults.

L3 Supporting our ageing population

Golden Age Event

An event was held at Chatteris One Stop Shop in October to help older people access benefit entitlement and sign post to support services. A total of 42 customers benefitted from the service receiving advice and assistance and 19 blood pressure tests were undertaken.

L4 Promote healthy lifestyles

Leisure Income on Target

Maintaining Leisure Centre income is important to help control and reduce the net expenditure for Leisure Services.

The income estimate for our Leisure Centres in this financial year is just under £2m and after 7 months of the year, income is within 0.5% of this target. This performance reflects an overall increase in income compared to the same period last year, despite the ongoing difficult economic climate.

Key reasons behind the current positive income performance are the recent capital investments at both the Hudson and the Manor Leisure Centres, increasing the attractions of the facilities to customers alongside more targeted marketing undertaken by the Leisure Team.

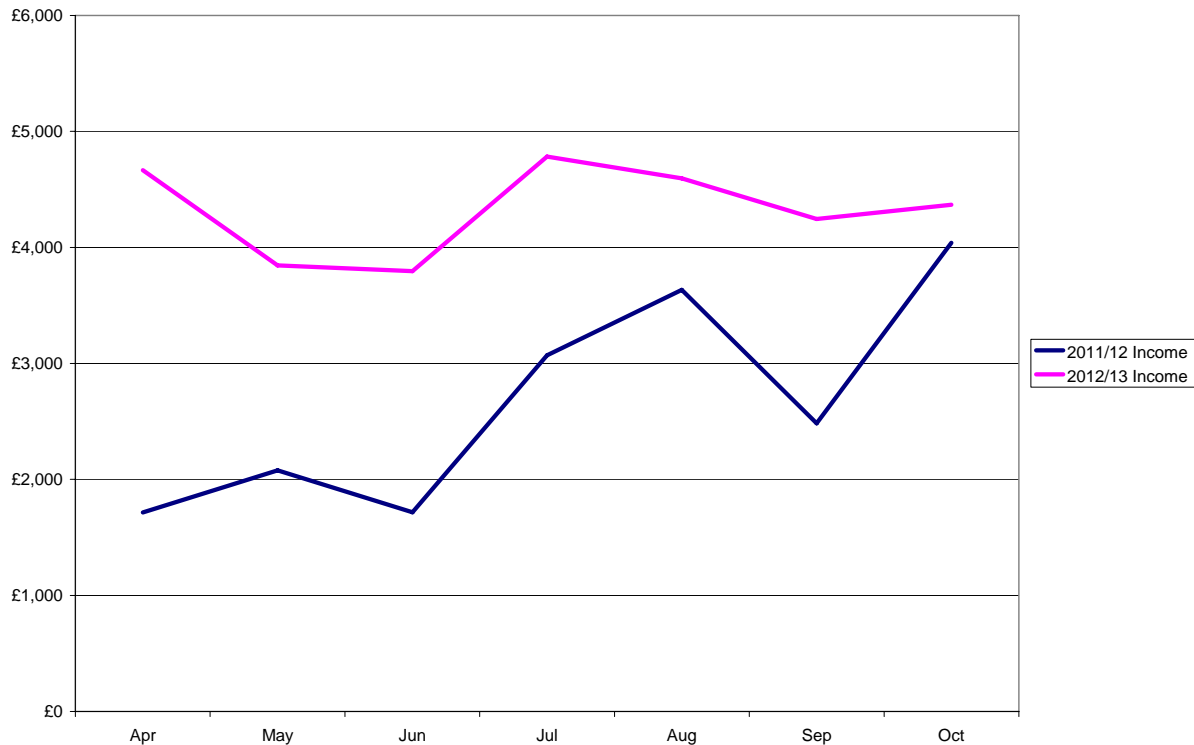
Soft Play Centre Performance

The two soft play centres at the Manor and Hudson Leisure Centres have been open for more than a year and are now attracting more than 1,000 young people every month.

Income has exceeded budget expectations this year, with more than £4,000 per month being earned in admission. The improvement compared with last year is highlighted in the chart below. The capital investment in the soft play equipment was approximately £95k. At the current levels of use, the original capital investment will be paid back after just over 3 years of operation.

As well as utilising space within leisure centres effectively, the soft play is a great introduction to the leisure centres for families and keeps young people moving. Promotion of linked activities, such as swimming lessons, is prevalent in the soft play areas to generate additional business from the enjoyable soft play experience.

Soft Play Income 2012



Leisure Service – Customer feedback

The period between July and September has seen an increase in customer feedback on the previous quarter. Customer feedback has been captured using a broad range of tools:

- Customer comment books
- Customer feedback cards
- Emails correspondence
- FDC's 3C's procedure

Feedback has been received from 237 customers across 3 sites. A total of 72% of those customers rated the service between 8 and 10 on customer satisfaction (1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest). It is positive news that the customers are making use of the feedback channels available and providing input that helps improve the service.

Customer feedback is crucial in a business that relies on repeat visits and positive word of mouth. Areas of the business that feature repeatedly in our 'You Said, We Did' feedback include:

- Fitness classes
- Ideas for other classes

- Praise for instructors
- Suggestions of varying class times
- Cleanliness (both positive and negative comments)
- Suggestions for improvements

Repeated feedback highlighting areas that require attention has ensured that operational teams are focussing on these areas to increase customer satisfaction and maintain our customer's loyalty.

Chatteris Leisure Opening

A family fun open day was held on 28 October to celebrate the opening of the Chatteris Leisure Centre and neighbouring All Weather Pitch. The event aimed to increase the local community's awareness of the new facilities to further drive sales, as well as celebrate the culmination of several years work with our partners.



With the help of Barry Fry, Director of Football at Peterborough United FC, and Louis Smith, Olympic Silver and Bronze medallist, the doors officially opened to Chatteris Leisure Centre and Chatteris All Weather Pitch in front about 1000 local residents.



The people who attended the day had the opportunity to have a look at the facilities and the children were able to take part in football coaching sessions with Peterborough United coaches. Fairground rides and other activities were also available. The day brought together both District and Town Councils and service teams from across FDC to deliver a truly memorable event.

The event was very effective at raising the profile of the facilities across the local area, with extensive coverage received in the local press, BBC Look East and BBC Radio Cambridgeshire. The centre received more than 82 enquiry cards on the day and the team has been busy converting these enquiries into memberships.

Prior to the Official Opening, 200 new members had signed up to Chatteris Leisure; this number has now risen to 322 following the success of the opening event.

L5 Engaging young people

Youth District Council (YDC) - Democracy Day

The YDC held their annual democracy day on 19 October 2012. The event was attended by 50 students representing four secondary schools from across the District. The event involved:

- a workshop on governance models and different styles of democracy
- a speed dating session where students quizzed members and senior officers
- a backchat session which involve the students giving feedback on local issues e.g youth activities

Free School Meal Update

The Council have been supporting the County Council and Schools by directly marketing to residents that we know should be benefitting from Free School Meals but for some reason are not taking up the opportunity. By signing up, the family will increase their disposable income and the school the child attends will receive additional inward investment from Central Government Grant. So far 33 residents have responded which gives an estimated £20,000 per annum additional revenue to Fenland Schools.

Sports Stars of the Future

The Council has been delivering the 'Sports Stars of the Future' project over the past year. This is a joint project with the Cambs Times and involves identifying talented young athletes within the Fenland area. To qualify for the scheme, the young people should be representing a sport at County, Regional or National level. Once identified, the athletes receive free access to FDC leisure centres to boost their training. The Cambs Times supports the project with coverage of the athlete and their use of FDC's leisure facilities.

Liam Knight, pictured right using the Hudson Leisure Centre gym, is a current Star of the Future. He competed at the 2012 Olympic Swimming Trials in four different events and was fortunate to be selected for the Junior GB Team for the European Swimming Championships in Antwerp. He is one of the first athletes to take part in the Fenland Sports Stars of the Future Campaign and has his sights firmly set on the 2016 Olympics.

The Council runs this project as part of the 2012 year of sport and the Council's commitment to promote healthy lifestyles for Fenland residents. This scheme identifies key community role models for young people encouraging them to become more active. There are currently three people enrolled in the project and the project was awarded the London 2012 Olympic Inspire Mark. Following London 2012, the project has been recently been re-launched, with the aim of having a cohort of up to 10 young people at any time.



Streets Ahead

SA1 Maintain current levels of waste, recycling & cleansing

Quality Refuse and Recycling Collection Service

Maintaining the performance of the highly regarded Fenland domestic waste service forms a key part of the Streets Ahead corporate priority.

The refuse and recycling staff team have had a very successful half-year to September, with the following highlights:

- Recycling rate of 53% for the first six months
- The recycling collected has generated £197,000 of income towards service costs.
- 100% of pre-paid Bulky Waste collections were performed on time.
- 97% of requests for new or replacement bins were delivered within 5 days
- 97% of all missed collections were collected the following working day.
- The number of missed bins is low at 0.1% of all collections, an average of 15 missed collections each working day.
- The need for the use of agency staff use has reduced by almost half at 272 days, compared to 588 in the same period last year.
- 18 public compliments were received, including –
 - "...thanks to the Refuse team who have helped move bins whilst recovering from an operation.....most appreciative"
 - "Thank you to the Refuse collection team who do a great job, provide value for money...."
 - "Thank you for the really good reliable bin service, the men are very considerate."
- And, 100% of the 52 refuse service complaints were investigated and responded to within 10 days, with all but 1 complaint being resolved at Stage 1.

Fenland Commercial Waste Services Continues to Grow

Fenland's commercial waste services offer waste and recycling services to 260 small to medium size businesses across Fenland.

A sales initiative to attract new customers to the integrated commercial waste and recycling services on offer has seen 32 new customers using the Council to provide their waste solutions since April 2012. This initiative involved providing trade waste information for FDC staff who regularly visit business premises, allowing them to promote the service.

As a result of customer retention and new business, the income for the first six months of the year is on target at £114,000 and the service continues to be well received by customers.

SA2 Delivering community projects that improve the streetscene

Eastwood Cemetery Extension



Following an identified need to increase cemetery capacity in March, works to the extension of Eastwood Cemetery in March have now been completed adding a further 700 plus burial plots. The improvements comprise a new access road to facilitate vehicular access for both funeral services and cemetery users, improved land drainage to enable grave side visiting during wet periods and the provision of a new outside water tap.

Further enhancements to the landscape along the boundary lines and to the new drainage ditches are also programmed following start of the next planting season. These improved facilities will ensure the Council provides adequate and will planned cemetery provision for the future.

Street Pride volunteers go the extra mile

Gorefield Street Pride volunteers decided to branch out this month by tackling the areas around the outskirts of the village that have never been targeted before. The chairman of the group was particularly pleased with how much this had improved the appearance of the village. More than 10 bags of litter were collected in this initial effort.



Whittlesey Street Pride also went the extra mile in October by planting 12,000 bulbs throughout Whittlesey and neighbouring villages. The group secured funds from 28 private sponsors including local businesses and residents in order to create a beautiful floral spectacle next spring.



Supporting these groups to become self sustaining and to increase their capacity to take environmental action in areas that are locally important is a corporate priority. Much work has taken place to enable volunteers to be effective including the provision of tools, materials, and guidance on staying safe, becoming constituted, self promotion, attracting funding and more.

Wisbech Christmas Market

Plans are progressing well for this exciting annual event. More than 80 traders have booked already and over 100 stalls and attractions are anticipated on the day.

Building on the experience and learning gained from past events, we are improving the plans for this year's range of activities. There will be live reindeer on show in Museum Square and the Museum will be staging a Dickensian Exhibition. In addition to the main market there will be a Continental Market in town on the day. There will also be a local steam engine at the market providing seasonal music from a street organ.

This is an important event for Wisbech ahead of Christmas, and attracts local people into the town to support the local economy, as well as tourists and visitors from outside of Fenland.



SA3 Promote a Safer Fenland

CCTV detections hits new heights

The Council were able to respond and/or detect over 2500 incidents since April 2012, allowing for 344 positive outcomes to be achieved as a result.

These included persons being arrested and fined as a result of CCTV for offences which included affray, drugs and theft and robbery offences.

These impressive figures to date clearly demonstrates the continued focus and drive by the Council moving forward to further support the Police in supporting our Community Safety priority and helping reduce crime levels and the fear of crime in Fenland.

Crime reduces throughout the District once again

The Fenland Community Safety Partnership (CSP) brings together partner agencies associated with crime reduction to share information and agree joint actions. The CSP's latest meeting was in October and the partnership received excellent results for the second quarter of the financial year.

- **All Crime currently down 17.8%,** **2743 incidents in Fenland**
- **Reduction in Criminal Damage by 12.2%,** **531 incidents in Fenland**
- **Reduction in Violent Crime by 12.2%,** **570 incidents in Fenland**
- **Detection of Shoplifting offences 65%** **260 incidents in Fenland**
- **Reduction in theft from Vehicles 20.9%,** **170 incidents in Fenland**
- **Reduction in ASB** **2,170 incidents against 2,916 same period 2011/12**

Dwelling burglary continues to be a CSP priority as further reductions are required, although lower level robberies in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) have been identified which are increasing the number of this crime type.

The CSP, with assistance from UK Border Agency and Gangmasters Licensing Authority, are targeting identified properties with suspected links to offenders to cause disruption and develop actions against theft, exploitation and fraud.

SA4 Provide quality parks and open spaces in Fenland

Maintaining Standards within our parks and open spaces

2012 has been a very difficult summer for the parks team and our contractor TLG. The weather has created many challenges through the extensive rainfall that occurred throughout April to July. Grass cutting proved very problematical at this time, despite the new equipment that TLG had brought for the contract.

Despite the challenging conditions, the following work has been completed:

- 56 miles of hedge trimming
- Grass cutting of more than the equivalent of 2,230 football pitches
- Bedding, shrubs and rose bushes equivalent to 373 tennis courts have been maintained
- Our 56 play areas and over 400 pieces of play equipment are maintained and safe

In October, a mid-year discussion took place between the Council and a Director from our grounds maintenance partner, The Landscape Group. Consideration was given to lessons learned from the recent difficult season, as well as plans for the rest of the year. Preparations taking place now will ensure that open spaces in Fenland look excellent next spring and summer.

Reflection on the performance of the contract so far and expectations for the remaining three years formed part of a strategic discussion. It is expected that discussions at this level will take place regularly to ensure a strong partnership that delivers parks open spaces that Members and residents can be proud of.

Closed Loop Green Waste Recycling

As part of the Grounds maintenance contract, TLG is required to recycle all green waste generated from the contract. The old salt bay at the Base is used predominantly for the storage and recycling of the green waste generated from the contract.

Around 1,200m³ of green waste is created annually. This is stored and every 6 months a large shredding machine is hired in to pulverise the waste, after which approx 300m³ of mulching material is left. After this stage the compost heaps are monitored, the temperature taken daily and the heaps turned weekly.

The result after approx 1 to 3 months will be a compost material suitable for mulching back onto the shrub beds. This process is known as closed loop recycling of green waste.

In addition to this, all tree pruning's are shredded on site and returned directly as mulch. The volume of green material is approx 5,200m³ of material a year with around 1300m³ of bark chips as a finished product which is redistributed to the nearest woodchip pathway or shrub bed.

Dogs Control Orders Launch

Officers took to the streets to advertise the new Dog Control Orders which came into force on 19 October. A launch event was held in Chatteris where local residents had the opportunity to find out first hand about the extra powers the Council now has. The powers allow FDC to tackle issues such as dog fouling and ensuring that children's play areas are clean and safe.



The officers went on to Wisbech, March and Whittlesey to spread the word prior to enforcement patrols that will start in November. Clear signs will also be on display throughout the district, showing people the areas from which dogs are excluded or where they must be kept on a lead. From November, an enforcement plan will be in place for the StreetScene Team to follow.

Following a public consultation earlier in the year, The Dog Control Orders have been brought into place to support the deliver of the Council's corporate priority to provide quality parks and open spaces in Fenland.

Open for Business

OB1 Develop business and employment in Fenland

Economic Estate

Occupancy at South Fens Business Centre is currently 81%, whilst occupancy at the Boathouse remains at 62%. Conference facilities at both business centres remain popular and are generating a healthy income for the Council.

The occupancy levels are slightly behind target. However, due to the 'incubator' nature of the centres, some tenants have moved on in Fenland to larger premises, employing more local people.

The centres/units continue to provide important 'start up' facilities for young businesses and the opening of the two business centres have created and/or safeguarded some 490 jobs, demonstrating their key role in the local economy.

Occupancy at the South Fens Enterprise Park remains at 41% and has now exceeded the end of year target of 40%. Occupancy at the Light Industrial Units is currently on target at 86%.

An integrated business support service to encourage new and inward investment business development

The Council has met with UK Trade & Investments to develop drop-in support surgeries based at South Fens Business Centre and the Boathouse Business Centre. These surgeries will help businesses identify export markets and how to develop them support and guidance. These events will be part of the Fenland for Business support and guidance programmes 'Enterprising Fenland'. This support programme has been running for 8 months with over 150 businesses attending during that period

Increased growth and retention in both commercial and tourism business communities

An exploratory meeting was held with a significant local business to discuss their future growth and development. They are interested in support the Fenland Enterprise in Education (FEE) project and be involved in the youth Employability Skills day being planned for early in 2013. The FEE project, with support from local businesses, have been involved in 42 different activities across the 4 community colleges to support Years 11,12 and 13 in career development.

Fenland Enterprise & Business Awards

The forth Fenland District Council sponsored 'Fenland Enterprise and Business Awards' took place in October at the Braza Club, March and was attended by

nearly 200 guests. The event is an ideal platform to promote and celebrate the diverse and creative business community that operate here in Fenland and an ideal networking opportunity for those businesses. The Council sponsored two awards 'Apprentice of the Year' won by Florence Cliss at 'Holiday with Us' who has retail outlets in Wisbech and March and the 'Tourism award' won by Secret Garden Touring Park. The 'Business of the Year' award was won by Fosters Property Maintenance as too was 'Business Person' Mr Steve Foster.

OB2 Promote the economic profile of Fenland

Support the development of a sustainable district wide broadband infrastructure

The Broadband Working Group is actively promoting the awareness of the Connecting Cambridgeshire Broadband project which has now passed the 20,000 signature mark. FDC officers have been proactively marketing the project to the business community and registering demand to demonstrate to the potential partner the competitive viability of delivering better and faster broadband in the district.

Improve and develop marketing opportunities and branding to deliver a coherent open for business message through a greater on-line presence

The Council attended the Business Focus Event at the East of England Showground to promote Fenland's business support offer under the 'Open for Business' banner. The event also provided an opportunity to promote the Council's property portfolio including future developments. The stand attracted over 50 businesses looking for support and financial assistance to develop their business. Norfolk and Waveney Enterprise Services (NWES) are now helping those businesses with support and guidance.

OB3 Raising aspirations and improving learning opportunities

Support partners with the development of initiatives for the improvement of skills among the Fenland workforce

The Council was involved in a joint event with the Jobcentre Plus to promote opportunities to unemployed people looking to develop and raise their aspirations through training and apprenticeship programmes. The event was held at the Boathouse with over 20 exhibitors from self-employment agencies, training and education providers on hand to discuss employment and training options including access to funding of programmes. The event was developed in response to the changing support landscape on offer to young unemployed people. Council Officers were on hand to answer questions on routes to employment within the local business community. Over 100 people attended the event.

Quality Organisation

Q1 Providing good quality and access to services for the community

Council Tax

Despite the continuing challenging economic climate, customers are still regarding Council Tax as a priority debt and this is helping us keep on target for our projected collection rate this year. We continue to focus on those avoiding payment. In October we issued 284 court summonses to customers (on a par with the same month last year when we summonsed 280 customers) who have not responded to previous bills and reminder notices; with a total value of £146,000. Of these, 242 customers failed to pay before the court hearing and further recovery action has been taken against them.

Business Rates

Business Rate collection remains a challenge and continues to fluctuate during the year, we were 2% below target at the end of October robust action continues to recover outstanding debts.

Customer Access

Contact Centre performance was strong in October with us delivering exactly on target answering 80% of calls within our standard of 20 seconds, and ensuring that only 5% of calls are abandoned; both very high performance for any public or private sector Contact Centre and shows our continued commitment to customer service and supporting residents with their queries.

Building Control

A guidance note has been produced on "Renovation of Thermal Elements" which will be soon to be posted on our website. The note was produced to highlight the fact that Building Regulations must be followed when roofing or re-roofing properties (even if it is a like for like replacement).

It is expected that the provision of this information will result in less contraventions or illegal re-roofs by the public and building contractors/roofing firms.

Cemeteries Service Update

Improved service standards continue to deliver this important service in a timely and efficient manner.

From April to September, 98% of memorial applications were completed within 10 days and 100% of cemetery searches were completed with 3 days.

A focus on timely and efficient service is supporting the service and ensuring that income remains ahead of target for the first half of the year.

Wisbech 2020 Vision Summit Meeting

The architects of the Wisbech 2020 Vision joined community and business leaders at the Boathouse for a special summit today, October 26, to consider ideas to boost the Wisbech economy and support the ambitions of local residents and businesses. Cambridgeshire County Council Leader Nick Clarke, Fenland District Council Leader Alan Melton and MP Steve Barclay launched the vision in March this year.

Since then, a range of public sector organisations have focused their energy and funds with businesses and community groups to develop plans for the future of Wisbech and the surrounding area. As part of this Dr Nicky Morrison of the University of Cambridge has been working within the Wisbech 2020 team, to explore options for the future economic role of the town.

The summit was the culmination of the first phase of this work, which included public surveys, roadshows and workshops. Delegates examined ideas put forward by stakeholders and the public, and helped to prioritise the projects for inclusion in the final vision document.

Detailed proposals will now be drawn up, with a final action plan for the Vision due to be launched in January 2013.

Q2 Continue to use our resources effectively

Annual Audit Letter

The Council has now received its Annual Audit Letter from PWC, our external auditors. This letter summarises the results of our 2011/12 audit for members of the authority and was presented to the Corporate Governance Committee on 4 December 2012. This report highly praises the Council in its financial management and governance, and provides further assurances to members and the public that taxpayer funds are being managed effectively and safely to deliver excellent services to the community.

Q3 Deliver regulatory services in a customer focused way

Horsefair Taxi Rank Temporary Arrangements

The Council has been working with the taxi trade to ensure that the temporary layover area in Canal Street was working as planned and assisted with utilising the two taxi rank spaces in Blackfriars Road. The Council are making regular

visits to the area in an effort to meet up with as many of the taxi trade as possible and show that the Council are supporting them through this period of change. Leaflets and signage showing where the Blackfriars Road rank and taxis are operating from were handed out to the public, shops and taxi trade in an effort to ensure 'business as usual'.

Safe Food for the Nation

In support of the Food Standards Agency strategy, "Safe Food for the Nation", a particular focus is being given to ensuring that there are controls in place to prevent *E.coli* food poisoning. This focus is applied during inspections of catering, retail and manufacturing businesses handling raw and ready to eat foods.

This is quite challenging for the businesses, often involving new work flows, additional equipment to avoid dual raw and ready to eat use, specific disinfectants and sometimes kitchen re-design to achieve separation and good work flow.

Wherever possible, the Council is working with local businesses during inspections to achieve these increased levels of hygiene control through advice and information. This approach is focussed on our business customers, supporting their business, whilst protecting public food consumers.



Annual Electoral Registration

Fenland has maintained its previous success in relation to the number of electors registered on the electoral roll. This year we successfully registered 75,929 electors onto the register, which represents 96.3% of the eligible residents in the district. This is a fantastic achievement, especially in light of the fact that the canvass was brought forward this year to accommodate the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) election. As a result of this additional election, the canvass commenced during the summer at a time of year when electors are not accustomed to completing the required documentation. Electoral registration is a key component of the performance standards the Electoral Commission judge us by as well as being an essential element of ensuring residents are notified of upcoming elections.